

Interview | Mrs. Sarah Sacks Bureaucratic Adviser of Chaim V'Chessed

New Oleh, We're Here for You!

Aliyah isn't always quite as picturesque as it looks on the Nefesh B'Nefesh pamphlets, is it? When the magic of being in Israel wears off, a lot of new olim experience a great deal of difficulty adapting to Israeli life. But whether you're knee-deep in bureaucracy or stumbling through the medical system, don't despair, there is someone to turn to for any issue you may have.

What is Chaim V'Chessed? Chaim V'Chessed is the one-stop address for English speakers in Israel experiencing any form of crisis or difficulty. Founded in 2015 by CEO Rabbi Paysach Freedman, a veteran Oleh, Chaim V'Chessed aims to advise, help and really be there for English speakers in all aspects of life.

Which services do you provide?

We have numerous departments at Chaim V'Chessed: hospital and medical, women's health, special education, mental health, geriatrics, bereavement and bureaucratic guidance. Our departments are staffed by experts in each field. We open around 50 new cases every day, and sometimes up to 70.

How does each department work?

Every case begins with a phone call, email or online submission from a client. We record all details in our confidential database to ensure proper follow up. Some cases, such as, "What is Bituach Leumi?" or "How can I get to Hadassah Ein Kerem?" are dealt with on the spot. Others, such as, "My child needs therapy," or "Can you help me get an earlier appointment for an urgent CT scan?" can become long-term, involving more effort and communication.

Zevi and Aralla Weingarten, our hospital representatives, circulate daily through Jerusalem hospitals, checking in on patients, ensuring they are cared for and clearing up miscommunications when necessary. They also work with hospital staff to solve billing issues and expedite appointments for Chaim V'Chessed callers. In our office, medical coordinator Mrs. Nechama Nulman takes new calls, does research and acts as the liaison between on-site Chaim V'Chessed staffers, healthcare providers and hospital staff.

Our women's health and mental health experts offer personalized advice, guidance and

referrals. These are very personal areas, and we deal with them with sensitivity and total confidentiality, even among staff members.

The special education department is led by Mrs. D'vora Grossbaum, a renowned professional who revolutionized special education in Jerusalem, and Mrs. Faigie Gugenheim, a highly qualified and experienced special educator. They go above and beyond in helping parents through every step of their unique process, whether their child needs speech therapy, genetic testing, psychological evaluations, occupational therapy or anything else.

The geriatrics department offers the elderly and their caregivers advice on care options and information on rights and benefits. Bereavement deals with burials, police intervention, bureaucratic complications and funeral arrangements for bereaved families.

We have three staff members who respond to emergency messages. Callers in crisis can leave a message and receive a prompt response at all hours of day or night.

What is your role in Chaim V'Chessed?

As one of Chaim V'Chessed's bureaucratic advisers, I deal with the infamous trib-

ABOUT CHAIM V'CHESSED

Chaim V'Chessed is a non-profit organization that helps English speakers navigate all areas of crisis or difficulty in Israel. Their phone hotline operates 9-5, Sunday through Thursday, with an emergency notification system that operates 24/6. Learn more at www.chaimvchessed.com.

Chaim V'Chessed can be reached at 072-CHESSED (243-7733), by email at support@chaimvchessed.com or online at www.chaimvchessed.com/contact-us.

ulations of Bituach Leumi, visas, Arnona, banks, driver's licenses and passports. We also frequently advise on various workplace and employment issues. I and my coworkers offer guidance on navigating these encounters and maintain a database of guides that explain numerous subjects.

If you both help Olim, what is the difference between Chaim V'Chessed and Nefesh B'Nefesh?

Nefesh B'Nefesh does an amazing job in making Aliyah happen. They help Olim through the entire Aliyah process and even offer assistance with the logistics of integration.

Chaim V'Chessed steps in the day after.

Olim face a lifetime of navigating day-to-day life in Israel. For English speakers who are struggling to adjust to a new culture and language usually without the nearby support of family and old friends, difficulties become crises much faster.

Chaim V'Chessed provides assistance, advice, guidance, advocacy and intervention in numerous areas. When we cannot offer the help that someone needs, we provide referrals to other appropriate organizations and professionals.

In short, if you are stuck for hours in the ER or need help understanding your water bill, you won't call Nefesh B'Nefesh, but you can call Chaim V'Chessed.

What is Chaim V'Chessed's greatest success so far?

Rabbi Freedman and the rest of the Chaim V'Chessed team have literally changed people's lives -- from saving tourists tens of thousands of shekels on medical procedures to obtaining approvals for life-altering pain medications. In an effort to help the community at large, Chaim V'Chessed also lobbies government officials with requests for change -- we have succeeded in obtaining transportation discounts for children of foreign *yeshiva* students, stopped banks from closing down the accounts of non-Israelis and more. Further change is on the horizon.

But the greatest success is when we hear the feedback we love most: that people feel we are here for them like no one else. Each staff member truly cares and does the utmost for our callers.

Living in Israel is a national dream and we take pride in enabling its realization. To me, it is so inspiring to hear that as much as Chaim V'Chessed has accomplished, Rabbi Freedman only wants to "help more people and help people more!"